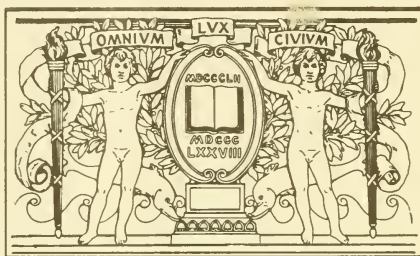


THE VINTAGE

SYLVIA CHATFIELD BATES

PZ3
.B3185V

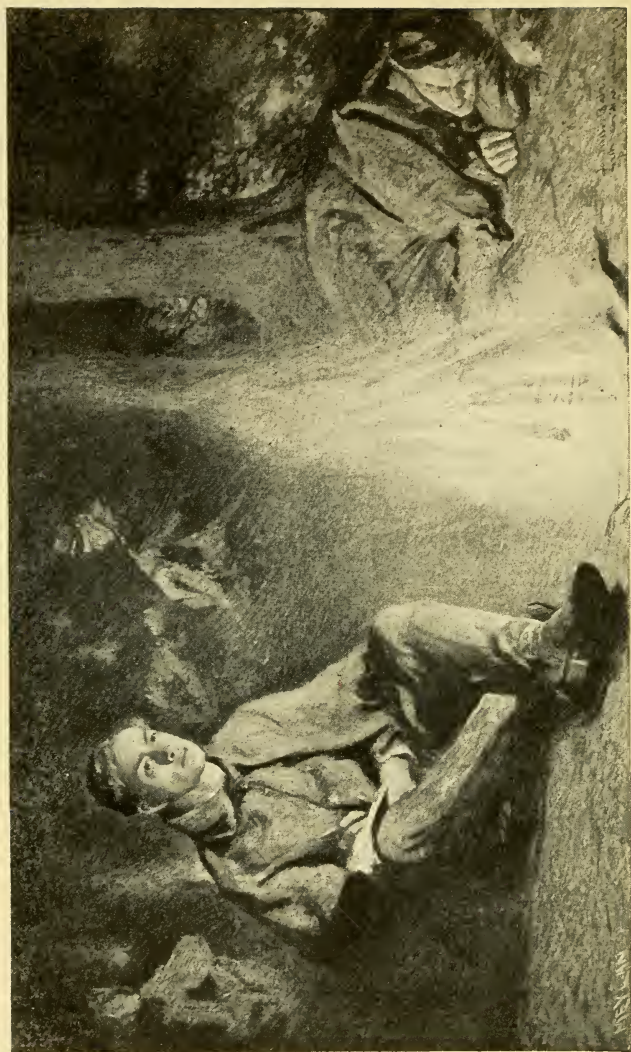


BOSTON
PUBLIC
LIBRARY



Fannie Heath Adams.

THE VINTAGE



“AT THAT FAR OFF TIME HE CANNOT FOREGO HIS INHERITANCE.”

THE VINTAGE

BY

SYLVIA CHATFIELD BATES

AUTHOR OF

"THE GERANIUM LADY"

FRONTISPIECE BY

PAUL JULIEN MEYLAN



NEW YORK
DUFFIELD & COMPANY

1916

Copyright, 1916, by
THE CROWELL PUBLISHING COMPANY

Copyright, 1916, by
DUFFIELD AND COMPANY

* P23

.B3185V

BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

TO
THE MEMORY OF
COLONEL JOHN L. CHATFIELD
SIXTH CONNECTICUT VOLUNTEERS
WHO DIED AUGUST 9, 1863

“The bravest are the tenderest
The loving are the daring.”

THE VINTAGE

THE BATTLE HYMN OF THE REPUBLIC

*Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of
the Lord:*

*He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes
of wrath are stored;*

*He hath loosed the fateful lightning of his terrible
swift sword:*

His truth is marching on.

*I have seen Him in the watch-fires of a hundred
circling camps;*

*They have builded Him an altar in the evening
dews and damps;*

*I can read His righteous sentence by the dim
and flaring lamps.*

His day is marching on.

*I have read a fiery gospel, writ in burnished rows
of steel:*

*“As ye deal with my contemners, so with you
my grace shall deal;*

*Let the Hero, born of woman, crush the serpent
with his heel,*

Since God is marching on.”

*He has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never
call retreat;*

*He is sifting out the hearts of men before His
judgment-seat:*

*Oh! be swift, my soul, to answer Him! be jubilant,
my feet!*

Our God is marching on.

*In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across
the sea,*

*With a glory in his bosom that transfigures you
and me:*

*As he died to make men holy, let us die to make
men free,*

While God is marching on.

THE VINTAGE

“**A**ND, isn't it nice, Lucy,” said old Mrs. Colbrooke, “Henry will be with us for Colbrooke Guards Day.”

They sat together on the spacious pillared veranda of the old Colbrooke house, the fragile lady of a period gone by, whose face still showed a dainty prettiness, the brown-eyed girl in a sprigged muslin, and young Henry Colbrooke, fresh from university graduate study, primed with all the laws that ever were on land and sea, including those that ought to be but are not. To old Mrs. Colbrooke's dim eyes he looked a dear and towering wonder,

THE VINTAGE

marvelously new, a beautiful miracle—the earthly immortality of the Henry Colbrooke she had loved long since. To Lucy Ammerton he was wonderful in another way. He might, sitting there with his legs crossed, smiling at his grandmother, mean all the future with its potential emotions; he might mean nothing. So delicate was the balance. There was a shade of exquisite awe in Lucy's eyes when she regarded him.

The vines flickered in the fragrant breeze; the tea things daintily clattered; red-winged blackbirds called contralto love-songs in the orchard, and the big gray cat rubbed against Henry Colbrooke's leg. The two women, the one so old, the other young as morning, felt rather than knew that

THE VINTAGE

in this handsome, clear-eyed, sunny young man lay the culmination of the past, the sum of the future, of a splendid race.

When Lucy, busy with such thoughts as had never come to her before,—that is, not since this same April—did not at once answer, Mrs. Colbrooke's soft voice repeated:

“We are to have dear Henry with us, Lucy, for Colbrooke Guards Day.”

“Yes, Cousin Evelyn,” said Lucy, looking at the young man rather shyly. They had used to call each other fourth cousins by stretching a point. Now, they were not so desirous of doing that. “It is high time he was here for that day. The idea of his being too busy or too far away or too something, always before! Perhaps when

THE VINTAGE

they know who he is they will let him raise the flag! That comes immediately after the salute is fired, Henry, and it is very important, you know."

The boy frowned. He stirred his tea, into which he had put three slices of lemon and three lumps of sugar. His fine mouth was grave, curved even sternly. They had been talking, before the tea had been brought out onto the veranda, about all sorts of modern things that Henry called "economic conditions" and "customs of the country," things that worried and grieved Mrs. Colbrooke, that stirred in Lucy a vague dread, a sense of deadening disappointment because the world, if these things were true, could not be the bright and beautiful place of its promise. Henry had studied,

THE VINTAGE

she knew; he read "deep" books, he must understand. Indeed, he seemed to understand so well that he held aloof in disgust, in utter condemnation, from things she had been taught to respect. And now, when she spoke of his raising a flag on the day dedicated to the memory of his grandfather by those who yearly honored the dead young soldier, Henry Colbrooke shook his head and burst out eagerly:

"Raise the flag! Why should I raise it? It's a very pretty flag, of course. But look at what it has come to stand for, what it countenances, shelters! Look at the suffering, and sin, and dirt, and inequality! Think of the tricks and grabbing and piling up of vulgar dollars! And the hypocrisy! Lord! And the grinding down of those who

THE VINTAGE

are borne to the earth already with loads! Land of the free, is it? We lie when we get off that cant. And the flag lies. You know it does, Grandmother. Don't look so shocked!"

"Henry!" Mrs. Colbrooke seemed little and pale and old.

"Why—why, Henry!" Lucy stammered.

"Do you know," said Mrs. Colbrooke, "that what you are saying, dear, is treason?"

"Treason!" The young man threw back his head, laughing. And when he laughed his voice was so clear and pleasant, his mouth so winning, that Lucy looked away. "Oh, come, Grandmother, we're not in the Middle Ages. There is the right of free speech, you know, though if it comes to telling the

THE VINTAGE

truth too loudly it's throttled even yet. No, thanks! I'm not going to raise any flag. Don't you see?—I *can't*, believing as I do. It wouldn't be sincere, would it? You know I'm through with all that. But I'll be glad to go to the ceremony." He leaned gently toward the old lady, his dark head near her white one. "And I'm sorry if I hurt you," he added hastily. "I—didn't mean to."

Mrs. Colbrooke rose, trembling. Two faint rose spots flushed her cheeks. She put her hand on the young man's brown hair and stroked it, speaking softly. Everything about her was soft. Henry once said to Lucy that his grandmother had what one would suppose an impossible combination of qualities. She was both soft and intrepid.

THE VINTAGE

"You don't understand, Henry," she said now. "I think perhaps it is my fault that you don't. . . . There is so much that you can't understand!"

With that she went into the house, soft gray draperies trailing.

So they were left alone on the veranda, young Colbrooke and Lucy Ammerton. And the blackbirds ventured nearer, calling their deep, rich "Onkalee, Onkalee!" The thrilling notes sent an added flush to the young man's smooth cheek, already tinged with the excitement of his iconoclasm.

"Oh, say, Lucy," he repeated, striding up and down the long veranda with his hands in his pockets and his head defiantly high, "you know I didn't mean to hurt her feelings. But we of this generation, we've

THE VINTAGE

just *got* to look at things as they are!"

She wished he would sit down. She wished the blackbirds were not calling.

"Cousin Evelyn is—is idealistic," faltered Lucy.

"It isn't idealism to go on worshipping something that no longer means what it did when you began your—your idolatry. Let's tell the truth, if we know how. It *is* idealism to refuse to be satisfied with a worn-out fetish." He was desperately in earnest, desperately eager and young. Moreover, as Lucy knew, this matter of raising a flag, though it had come up unexpectedly, was symbolic of other more practical things he had held away from lately. As he elegantly said, he had chucked it all. There would be, thenceforth,

THE VINTAGE

no patriotism in his! Now he stopped beside her, bending a little to look into her face.

“Oh, Lucy, let’s drop this! I’m sorry I said so much to-day. Look at the orchard. Sha’n’t we walk down to the brook now—down to the old stepping-stones? I’ll pull you some sweet flag—there, we can’t get away from the word, even!—and we’ll ask Grandmother to candy it. You’d like that?”

“I don’t know,” said Lucy, “that I want to go.”

“But you’re going, you know you are!” He laughed again, this time quietly and merrily confident as he bent over her. “Didn’t I come here to-day on purpose to tell you something, oh, awfully important? But it’s got to be in the orchard. . . . First,”—

THE VINTAGE

he lowered his voice in a sudden boyish awkwardness, though there was no one near,—“first I’ll tell you, you are exactly like a—a pale pink primrose. . . . Come on, Lucy. Just hear that black-bird *now!*”

The orchard was bursting into its first sweetness, with all its tiny shell-pink buds, and here and there an open blossom among small light-green leaves. And the sun shone low. They crossed the stepping-stones, Henry going first, solemn now and a little pale. Lucy followed him, though she wanted to turn and run away, because her knees felt queer. There was this about Henry—one followed him.

And it was because her knees felt queer that she slipped on the last stone. He turned and caught her, and pulled

THE VINTAGE

her away from the water in time. Then, thus having her, he lifted her up in his arms.

“Lucy, Lucy!” he whispered. “You know what I came to say!”

He couldn’t tell how she got there, but suddenly she was standing a yard or so away from him under a flowering branch, with strange eyes, and the pink - sprigged muslin all crumpled. And he was staring at her in horror.

“Oh, no, no, no!” he heard her saying, and her voice seemed a long way off. “Oh, no! You spoil my world for me. You say such things. I won’t have it spoiled! I love it. I think it’s kind and beautiful. You see only the horrid part! You make it all dreadful! And besides,”—she lowered her eyes, while he still stood dumb with pain—

THE VINTAGE

“I—why I love this country, and the flag of this country. I—I couldn’t love a person—who would say—such things!”

The sun went quite away, and left the orchard in a cold, pale light, with all its snowy boughs immovable and ghostly.

The morning after that day upon which Henry Colbrooke took Lucy into the orchard and down to the stepping-stones, and told her something there, also the morning of the Colbrooke Guards celebration, was one of purple clouds and straight-falling spring rain, musical but dreary. It could not have been otherwise, the boy thought.

They had come back from the orchard walking apart and slowly, and

THE VINTAGE

had eaten supper opposite each other miserably. For Henry could not rush away as he longed to do. He had come on a visit to his grandmother. And this was Lucy Ammerton's home, where she had grown up. Besides, there was Colbrooke Guards Day. It was an old desire of his grandmother's, never yet satisfied, that he should be in Colbrooke for that. She adored him, he knew, partly because of his likeness to his grandfather, whose whole name he oddly bore. He had often heard the picturesque story of his mother's adventurous journey West, where she had met and loved a dashing Mr. Colbrooke—all that there might be another Henry Colbrooke in the world!

The rain fell in the desolate orchard, so beautiful only yesterday, and the

THE VINTAGE

young man, all the brightness taken out of him, went grimly up to the third story of the old house, where there was a rambling room under the eaves called "the study," though nobody ever studied there. It was full of the most decrepit of the antique furniture—secretaries minus knobs, chairs with weak joints, and a yellow-keyed piano. There he tramped up and down, composing violent speeches to justify what he had said in Lucy Ammerton's presence that had so unaccountably "spoiled her world."

"Lucy and Grandmother are sentimental," he declared aloud to the oldest secretary. "Women always are, I suppose. . . . Honor the flag of a country that makes money out of suffering? I guess not! But why should she care?"

THE VINTAGE

And then, just because he suddenly saw Lucy as she had looked in the orchard in her pale pink-sprigged muslin with her brown eyes raised to his, he sank down on a creaking davenport and hid his face in his hands, and felt his fingers wet all at once with something strange and hot.

Because he was just what he was, it never occurred to him to go and tell Lucy that he had not meant what he said. Besides, he was himself fine enough to see that this would not undo the harm done. He had placed a heavy hand on the balance and weighed it rudely the wrong way. Should he have shielded Lucy, he wondered, from his wider knowledge? He knew at once that this was not the remedy. In some way it was he who had failed, not

THE VINTAGE

Lucy. With all this he felt that Lucy had argued nothing out! For her it was only a feeling! After the few difficult tears had dried he bit his lip angrily. They were making a great deal, these gentle women, out of nothing!

So his grandmother found him with his head still bowed, when she came up to the old study and put the letters into his hands.

“My dear,” she said in her gentle old voice, and patted his hair, smoothing his forehead as if she knew that it ached, “I have been thinking about our talk yesterday, and blaming myself. It is hard to speak about what is deepest in your heart. That is why I have not taught you — things I never dreamed you would need to be taught. But the world changes! Take these

THE VINTAGE

and read them. He was like you then, just a little older, and a little handsomer, Henry.”

“Who?” he asked.

She smiled. “Your grandfather. It seems absurd to call him that. He was so slim and boyish, like you, and—I used to think he had a beautiful smile. Sometimes when we were at an assembly and there was a crowd, and through a little opening of people when we had got separated he would nod at me, I thought no other gentleman in the room had so charming a smile. . . . Our baby was not a month old when he died. And you are her son. It has always made me happy that she was destined to marry a Colbrooke, although of a different family, so that you could have his name. . . . You

THE VINTAGE

see, he must have been your grandfather!"

Henry Colbrooke looked at the very old lady, wistfully handling the letters of her boy husband. And then he put his arm around her. She flushed and trembled.

"I want that you should read his letters, dear," she said, and hurried away.

That is how Henry Colbrooke came to read the letters—selected and arranged for him by his grandmother—that another Henry Colbrooke, scarcely older than he, wrote to "Evelyn." When he saw that name Henry recalled with a shock that the dead young soldier had loved her just as he loved Lucy Ammerton. How strange it seemed. It made him feel one of a long line—this pain and joy of the

THE VINTAGE

common lot that had so recently come to him. He smoothed out the old faded paper. He might as well read them at once, since his grandmother wished it. The first letter was dated from a training camp in the earliest part of the Civil War, and began, "My dear Wife." The boy smiled gravely at the dignified manner of an older time, rumpled his hair, and read with a heavy ache inside his chest because the words recalled Lucy. But as he read he soon forgot even Lucy:

My dear Wife,—We did not plan for this, or want it; we did not—we did not! The last thing that I dreamed when I saw you first and loved you was that I could deliberately leave you—in the first year of our marriage! War

THE VINTAGE

has come; and it changes all things. I have been remembering our three years of waiting, because we were so young and poor—waiting for this! But I would not have you think, dear, that I regret my duty. And I will come back to you. I promise it.

I have been hard at work all day helping get the company into shape. . . . [There followed a description of a volunteer camp at the beginning of the Civil War. And then]

Watch out for my bluebirds in the back lot. Don't let anything harm their nest, will you, Evelyn?

Your Loving Husband.

My dear, dear Wife, — What you have told me fills me with tremblings

THE VINTAGE

of the body and soul. You are right. If you had told me before, I might not have had the fortitude to leave you. I cannot believe it yet! You seem like a beautiful child yourself. And really, old as I am, I often feel quite like a boy! Will it be a boy or a girl, I wonder? Which would you rather have? Are you sure you are well cared for? Evelyn—if I could be with you and guard your every step! I want to see you pretty badly. I want to put my cheek against yours and feel you in my arms. I want to tell you what this means to me in ways I cannot write.

You keep calling me brave. I am not brave at all. I am as homesick as the devil! . . .

I have kept this news for the last. We break camp to-night and start

THE VINTAGE

South in the early morning. We do not know much, but have reason to believe that we shall proceed without delay to the front, for the Sixth is in rather better shape than most regiments. You must not worry about me.

I wonder how it will feel to kill. I shall kill men. And I have just remembered, dear,—over each man I kill two people have felt at least part of what we feel about him. I really don't hate them at all. I merely know that this country must not fall apart into ruin, far too heavy a price was paid for it for that. And men must be free. That seems simple.

I will write again on the train and post the letter at my earliest opportunity.

I would not say good-by, except

THE VINTAGE

that it means God be with you.

. . . Good night! Good night!

Your Loving Husband.

Do not worry about me.

Dearest Evelyn,—It was stupid of me to manage to be hit in the first battle I was ever in! Somehow I feel that it was green and blundering to get in the way of a bullet so soon. I thought I probably should be wounded later. This promptness seems absurd. But here I am in the hospital, having good care, feeling fairly well now, and very repentant, dear, for giving you such a fright. You are not to disturb yourself at all about me. And you must stop thinking about the others, worse off than I. You must stop. I order it. And when I give an order

THE VINTAGE

it's obeyed these days, young lady. Thanks for the congratulations. I didn't do very much. Since, old as I am, being sick always makes me feel very young, I want to tell you—really it is fun being a captain!

I will not pretend I have not suffered. But it is past now, so do not break your heart over it. I shall not tell you about that, or about what a battle is like until it is all over, for you and for me; and I am a veteran (absurd again!) and you—are a mother. I like to say that beautiful word under my breath. . . . When all that has happened, I shall have stirring tales to tell my son. I don't see why I should not believe in miracles. I am going to have a little son! . . . We'll build a fire winter nights, we three, and draw

THE VINTAGE

around, and I'll tell him stories of the war. What is that? "Shouldered his crutch and showed how fields were won"? Don't jump. I am all right or I should not be going back. But I am trying to make up my mind, these quiet days here, to anything that may happen. . . .

My dear Wife,—The chief thought in my mind, and prayer of thankfulness in my heart, is that we have had these three months together. I have blessed God the bullet did hit promptly so that I could be with you and care for you at least part of this time. It was hard to come back and leave you. We must not talk of that. Many things are hard.

All day long I have seen you on the porch in your blue dress, sewing. You

THE VINTAGE

looked so pretty with the flowers all around you. I am glad that I got home in time to get ahead of the weeds in the garden. That pink foxglove never would have lived another week. I pretended not to like to have you worry for fear gardening would tire me. I did like it. I loved it!

To-morrow I plunge in. There will not be much time for letters. This will be war in earnest. I had only a taste before.

My heart is full to-night. But I cannot write of these things. God bless you and keep you. God give us strength for everything. Good night, Evelyn.

Dear Girl,—Just a moment snatched to tell you of my dream last night. We

THE VINTAGE

are waiting at a difficult ford, and this is scrawled on a note-book leaf. I dreamed the baby was a little girl. Also that the war lasted a long time—years. I was brought home wounded, and felt myself carried along a rough road on a stretcher. Presently, though I could not see, I heard the strangest, tenderest, most exquisite sound—little footsteps trudging along, as of the smallest feet, beside me. I put out my hand, and touched something very soft, and said: “Is this my little Mary?” Then a tiny hand slipped into mine; and I awoke. I had felt her very plainly. But I never saw her. Always,

H. C.

My dear Wife,—My last letter was only a note. There is so little time!

THE VINTAGE

And not much that I can tell you. In spite of that I want you to know that I am having a great experience within my soul. Things always before smothered in many wrappings of the little matters of everyday living emerge naked. The old myths of Siegmund and of Arthur who drew forth the sword from the ash-tree and from the rock—wasn't Arthur's sword in a rock?—must have grown, I think, out of a half-unconscious universal experience. Those swords came out clean and shining for the appointed ones who alone knew what to do with them. And they fought evil. Siegmund fought the greed of gold, didn't he? And Arthur—Sense. . . . I just grope blindly for the meanings of things. I cannot understand much of this. But it is wonder-

THE VINTAGE

ful to be with hundreds and thousands of men who all think alike on at least one subject, believe in one thing so strongly that they will dare this hell for it. Did I whimper some in my first letter, about our not wanting the war? Of course we didn't want it; but it is here. (I was homesick when I wrote that letter.) Haven't I heard somewhere about a man whose life was "a daring poem"? That phrase stays with me. I should like my life, and my death when it comes, to be a daring poem.

I am not telling you details. It is not right for me to now. But I want to give you a brief incident that happened yesterday, just the fact shorn of all the horrors. There was a boy in my company, the youngest of all of us,

THE VINTAGE

whose name was Peter Darlington. He was nicknamed "Darling," both because of his name and because he had light red hair and blue eyes like a girl's. But there wasn't anything girlish about Darling! You have seen the type—thin and muscular and brave as a young devil—or angel. Well, yesterday in a small engagement he was shot. It was all very brief. I was with him under a pine-tree. . . . Evelyn, as long as I live I shall be able to smell those pine needles and see the bright sky all peaceful and high and blue up there. Peter Darlington lived five minutes. He just looked up at the tree and the sky and he said to me—"It was all I could do!" . . .

Since then I've been thinking. . . .

But of all these things, dear, I think

THE VINTAGE

the incident that has meant most to me was the President's visit to our camp. It was a very brief glimpse we had of him. Nevertheless, I shall carry the impression of it in my soul to my grave.

We were drawn up for inspection. It was a damp, foggy morning, with a smell of rich wet earth. He came slowly down our line with the General. I remember that he had a green scarf around his neck that sat oddly with his high hat, and that he had on large and muddy rubbers. He looked into the eyes of many of us, his own eyes traveling slowly from face to face. And, Evelyn, when I saw his look I had my first feeling that this war may not be quickly over. He seemed to be recoiling from something bitter and, I say the

THE VINTAGE

truth, to be in his own spirit vicariously dying with us.

He stood clutching the end of that long green scarf and spoke to us, very briefly. That look as our eyes met—yes, Abraham Lincoln and Henry Colbrooke with bared souls—had so set my mind in confusion that I took in very little he said. I remember only this that came clearly, to quiet me:

“And having thus chosen our course, without guile and with pure purpose, let us renew our trust in God, and go forward without fear and with manly hearts.”

Then he was walking slowly away, and I was looking foolishly at those mud-splashed rubbers, wondering just how much their long steps measured,

THE VINTAGE

and thinking that his back looked like that of a sad old man.

As long as ever I live I shall not forget this day.

Your Loving Husband.

Dear Evelyn,—I have seen the President again! Seen him! I have been with him; I have talked with him! This is how it happened.

The colonel had written a letter to him. I knew, because he told me, that it was about the case of a young Southern woman whose husband we had caught within our lines as a spy. This little Mrs. Joralymon had been setting the colonel nearly crazy begging him for her husband's life. So since he knew the President was within ten miles, Colonel Farwell thought he

THE VINTAGE

would put the matter before him, not liking the job himself. That is what they are all doing, everywhere, piling the burden heavier and heavier on his shoulders. So I went. I rode over across country. And I found him at a farm - house opposite a red - brick church and a cemetery.

It was afternoon, sunny and almost warm. The whole scene was so home-like I could not believe there was a war or that my errand meant what it did. I was admitted at once when I gave the colonel's name. When I came into the dining-room, where some officers had just finished conferring with the President, I found him sitting at the table drinking a glass of buttermilk!

“How are you, Captain Colbrooke?”

THE VINTAGE

he said to me. (They had given him my name.) “Have some?”

And he poured me a glass of buttermilk from a cracked blue pitcher, and I sat there and drank it with him. (Isn't it funny—I forgot entirely that I hate buttermilk? I drank it all.)

Then I gave him the letter about the Joralymons. He sat there reading it, with the sun shining in on him, and on the bare table (it was mahogany) and the blue pitcher, and his large brown hands with big knuckles, and his dusty boots on a blue braided rug. I can see it all, and set it down for you. He laid the letter on the table and looked at me. I cannot tell you about his face.

“Do you know about these poor children?” he asked me.

THE VINTAGE

I told him that I did, and that I had seen Mrs. Joralymon.

He looked a long time at me, and then out of the window at the red-brick church in the sun, and then back at me. I saw that look in his eyes again that I saw at inspection. He was going through it with them. Then he said:

“What am I going to do?” Twice:
“What am I going to do?”

He brushed the letter aside and, leaning on the table, looked me up and down.

“I remember you,” he said. “Saw you at the inspection yesterday. We gave each other a look—hey?—eye to eye. I am going to tell you what I thought I saw in that look. I thought you were as much as saying to me—

THE VINTAGE

‘You’ve brought me here; what are you going to do about it?’ Was I right?”

I just gasped. “Why, Mr. Lincoln,” I said, “I wanted to come! I volunteered!”

He smiled. “So that’s it. That’s how you feel.”

“Yes, sir,” I said.

“But I saw trouble in your eyes. What’s the matter, son?”

He said it so gently, and the dining-room was so bright and quiet, and the sunlight so peaceful outside on the church, that all at once I felt as if something were smothering me and going to engulf me. I must have looked queer, because he stretched his long arm across the table and patted my arm, and said:

THE VINTAGE

“Tell me about it.”

And I began to tell him about you, and the baby, and about my dream; and I got all jumbled up and told him about Siegmund’s and Arthur’s swords, and about what Peter Darlington said under the pine-tree.

Then he smiled at me—when he smiles he looks very tired—and said quietly: “So that’s why you wanted to come.”

And I answered, more jumbled than ever, something like this: “I didn’t know it was why, but it must be that it was!” And I added that I thought it was you and Arthur and he himself and Nathan Hale that made me want to come.

“And Joralymon?” he asked slowly.
“What about—him?”

THE VINTAGE

There he had me.

He got up and walked up and down with a long slouching step. We were quiet for a little. Then he came where I stood by the table and put his hand on my shoulder.

"I am going to let you decide about Joralymon," he said.

I couldn't believe it was true.

"Remember your dream," he added. And then he spoke solemnly, "'We are such stuff as dreams are made of, and our little life is rounded with a sleep.'"

"Couldn't you, sir? It was a brave thing he did, and she's so young." I got it out.

He smiled. "You just watch me, young man. Just watch me."

And he sat down at the table and

THE VINTAGE

made a fearful scratching noise with an old quill pen, and handed me the wet paper.

“I want to hear about that baby,” he said. Then I got up and left him.

And I rode away across the fields until the sun had set—rose and gold and your lavender. . . . How wonderful the world is! . . .

This is all set down for you because I love you.

H. C.

(Written on a torn leaf of a note-book.)

My darling Girl,—This is written in the saddle before a country inn and intrusted to an old darky for mailing. The dispatch has just reached me.

THE VINTAGE

Joy for my little daughter fills my heart, and joy for you. Kiss her for me. Her father must ride on now, thinking of his two dear girls. Love to you both.

Henry.

Do you remember my dream?

Dear Evelyn,—We are camped to-night in a valley on the edge of a great wood. To-morrow we shall march up a long slope to a ridge, behind which the sun went down last night very red. Somewhere beyond that ridge, on a wide far-off field, a battle will be fought. It lies quiet to-night—that field. I suppose the grass smells fresh and sweet in the dark. . . . The men are quiet, too. Not many of them are sleeping, though we need rest. Some

THE VINTAGE

are writing letters, like me. Some are lying on the ground looking at the sky, and listening to the noise of a stream that runs very clear over white stones not far from me. It comes swiftly down the slope from that high field behind the ridge. I cannot see the ridge now. It is too far off, and the night is too dark. But I cannot stop thinking of that field beyond it, Evelyn, up there in this peaceful night.

Before the baby came, I held back things I wanted to say to you. You had enough to think about. There are things I want to say that I must say now—I was going to add—if ever. I do add it. For it is only simple and natural and right to own that it may be I, to-morrow night, lying up there with the others who surely will be

THE VINTAGE

there. Anyway, we shall be under a wide, warm sky. I really think I should not mind lying in such a place as that!

Since I saw the President I have been thinking things out. He and the baby have helped me. A child takes a man on into the future so. It is the immortality of his body. Since that is so marvelously planned, dear, why need one doubt but that the same is true of the soul?

You and I know why I am here. We need not go into that again. I merely want to ask you to let my little daughter know why. I had thought to have a son. I welcomed the little girl as gladly. But the thought has come to me to-night—*she* may have a son. And if she does have a son I

THE VINTAGE

should want him to know the price paid for all that he will inherit. If it be saved, whole and united, this will be a very precious country! The older a country grows, the more precious it becomes because of the costly sacrifice that has lifted it up. Tell him that is why I am here. Because I could not let what was so dearly bought go down into disgrace and ruin. It was passed on to me, a trust to keep.

There is a new song we have heard here, written by a woman, called a Battle Hymn. Some of the men have learned it. They are singing it now, softly, within the edge of the woods. I will write down what I know of it for you.

“Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming
of the Lord;

THE VINTAGE

He is trampling out the vintage where the
grapes of wrath are stored;

He hath loosed the fateful lightning of his
terrible swift sword;

His truth is marching on. . . ."

That second line is what old Bradley in school would have called a "noble figure." Trampling out the vintage of the grapes of wrath! . . . Thinking, here, about my child that I may never see, it has come to me that in the years that will pass before *her son* is grown, what may not be the terrible problems he will have to face! The grapes of wrath may be swollen and purple then for a darker and more awful vintage! And when it is trampled out, at that far-off time, *he cannot forego his inheritance*. He cannot act as though you had not suffered and I had not

THE VINTAGE

died to give it him. Because that will be passed and done for. He cannot change it.

I have caught some other lines:

“He is sifting out the hearts of men . . .

Oh! be swift, my soul, to answer Him!

be jubilant, my feet!”

I cannot truthfully say I am not glad to-night. I think my soul is swift. . . . The very end of the song is in my ears while I am still thinking of our small Mary's son:

“As He died to make men holy, let us die to make men free!”

He may not have to die. In those days there would be, I should think, no more war. But he can live for the

THE VINTAGE

same reason. I think, to-night, that nothing could be worse, could so strike to my soul, living or dead, than to have dishonor come to the country that has cost what I have seen and what I shall see. If the institutions we are, please God, saving should develop wrongly, let him change them, preserving in them what may be good. Let him improve and not demolish; cherish, not hate. He will not need to be urged, I hope, to love. And if war still lives in the world, if a foreign enemy should ever come, let him give his arms and his heart to these United States.

Do you remember what we learned in school and thrilled when we recited it, not so long ago? It is ringing in my head to-night. It has rung all day as

THE VINTAGE

I rode hard—it was beaten out by Redskin's hoofs. (I wonder how he will fare to-morrow. An endearing horse, Evelyn, sixteen hands high, and swift.)

“When my eyes shall be turned to behold for the last time the sun in heaven, may I not see him shining on the broken and dishonored fragments of a glorious Union. . . . Let their . . . gaze rather behold the ensign of the Republic, still full high advanced, its arms and trophies streaming in their original luster, . . . bearing for its motto no such miserable interrogatory as—What is all this worth?—but everywhere, spread all over in characters of living light . . . on its ample folds . . . and in every wind under the whole heavens — Liberty and Union,

THE VINTAGE

now and forever, one and inseparable!"

It seems too bad—but I cannot write any more. I must rest. I shall lie down thinking of you.

The attic room was flooded with golden light as Henry Colbrooke laid down the last yellow sheet. The rain had stopped and a warm sun was shining. He walked to the window and leaned out, taking deep breaths of the sweet air.

A voice called at the foot of the stairs:

"Henry, are you coming with us, dear?"

It was his grandmother's voice. He started. It was time to go to the

THE VINTAGE

cemetery. The cemetery! This—why this was the twentieth century. This was Colbrooke Guards Day!

“Coming, Grandmother,” he called. And clattering down the stairs, he lifted the little lady up and kissed her. They did not look at each other.

They drove in the old carriage, he and his grandmother and Lucy, through the rain-drenched woods, past wide up-lying fields of waving grass, finding their way by unobserved back lanes to that spot in the cemetery where the yearly ceremony was held in memory of a young man who had achieved more than ordinary valor on that day of his death upon “the field of honor.”

Drawn up before an elevation sloping toward the east was a thin line, the

THE VINTAGE

few men who had been with him that day, old men. Behind them and at their left and right were two companies of militia, tall and strong and young, these men of the second generation since his day. They were called the Colbrooke Guards. And rising up above them high on the green knoll was a figure in bronze, wrought by a great artist at the bidding of this community, in honor of a young man who had given all he had to give.

There he stood, looking off across the heads of the people into the heart of the low and glowing sun, a light and graceful figure, head up, sword drawn, slightly smiling. Below him were two graves, his daughter's and his own.

The ceremony proceeded. With bared head Henry Colbrooke listened,

THE VINTAGE

but he was as one in a dream. He knew that a man made a speech, eloquent and hackneyed. A salute was fired over one of those graves. He turned away—he was surprised to find that he could not look. Then a quartet started a song which every man in the companies took up. It rose and boomed in many voices and echoed among the wet and shining trees. It tramped in a majestic rhythm.

“Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming
of the Lord;

He is trampling out the vintage where the
grapes of wrath are stored;

He hath loosed the fateful lightning of his
terrible swift sword;

His truth is marching on. . . .”

Toward the end of the song a man in uniform came and spoke deferen-

THE VINTAGE

tially to Henry. His heart glowed at that deference, and yet was humbled by it. It was for the name he bore! Without looking at his grandmother or Lucy he slipped out of the carriage.

They put a cord into his hand. Some one signaled, and he pulled on the cord.

Slipping up, up into the golden sunlight, the flag rose, hesitating, dipping a little, drooping in its brilliance, then, caught by a breeze, unfolding in dignity and amplitude, flying free and glorious in the clean air under the warm blue sky. It was almost as if the brave uplifted head in bronze were raised to it. . . .

Henry and Lucy walked home together. It was Henry's idea that his grandmother might like to be alone except for old Nicholas. They left the

THE VINTAGE

cemetery and walked along the country road in silence. In the distance the martial notes of the Colbrooke Guards band blared forth:

“Glory, glory, hallelujah! His soul goes marching on!”

When Lucy's fingers crept under his arm as he helped her across a puddle, Henry laid his hand on them, half fearfully. She, like his grandmother, had put in her small way something else before love. With her beside him he vividly felt that he had been present that day at the supreme personal sacrifice. And one more time the supreme sacrifice made dark things light, the crooked straight, rough places plain. Henry Colbrooke knew that when the vintage was trampled out, the lightning

THE VINTAGE

loosed, and hearts were sifted, his feet would not be slow among the jubilant ones. But he would not have said it that way for the world!

At last he broke their silence.

"I was a cad, dear,—do you hear me? An odious cad! I guess, after all, it's up to me. If I don't like some of the things that that old rag stands for"—it was embarrassing to talk about the "flag" in this commonplace generation—"I can get busy and change 'em, that's all. But you can bet I'll—I'll cherish it. I'll defend it! Why, Lucy, I believe I'd rather die than see it harmed!"

And there in a wet green lane, shining with warm sunlight, Lucy kissed him. A blackbird was calling—"Onkalee! Onkalee!"

THE END

Boston Public Library



3 9999 05405 7334

